

Issue Brief

School Reopening Planning: Federal, Association, and State Considerations

July 14, 2020

OVERVIEW

As we approach the traditional start of the academic school calendar, school district administrators, educators, staff, and parents are working to determine the feasibility and practicality for schools to reopen in light of COVID-19. It is imperative that education and public health leaders work collaboratively to develop plans that support the health and wellbeing of students, teachers, staff and the community, while working to reduce possible transmission of COVID-19. Communities across the country and [world](#) are identifying hybrid and alternative mechanisms of traditional instruction to ensure that core and ancillary components of education are provided. These plans and recommendations consider a variety of factors, both known and unknown, that should be taken into consideration. The examples below provide guidance and recommendations from national associations, state action plans, and other resources that can be used to inform future recommendations and policy decisions.

CDC GUIDANCE

- [CDC Activities and Initiatives Supporting the COVID-19 Response and the President’s Plan for Opening America Up Again](#) (May 2020)
- [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs](#) (April 2020)
- [Interim Considerations for K-12 School Administrators for SARS-CoV-2 Testing](#) (June 2020)
- [Considerations for Schools](#) (May 2020)

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION POLICY ACTIONS

American Academy of Pediatrics

- [COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry](#)

American Association of School Administrators

- [AASA COVID-19 Recovery Taskforce Guidelines for Reopening Schools](#)

American Federation of Teachers

- [Plan to Safely Reopen America’s Schools and Communities](#)

Council of Chief State School Officers

- [Restart and Recovery Framework](#)

National Association of Elementary School Principals

- [COVID-19 Update: Education Commission of the States and COVID-19 Policies](#)

National Association of School Nurses

- [Interim Guidance: Role of the School Nurse in Return to School Planning](#)
- [COVID-19 Federal Guidance for Students with Disabilities](#)

National Association of Secondary School Principals

- [COVID-19 Resources for School Leaders](#)
- [State and Federal Policy Response to COVID-19](#)

National School Boards Association

- [COVID-19: Preparing for Widespread Illness in Your School Community](#)

National Association of State Boards of Education

- [Preparing Facilities for Student's Return in the Wake of COVID-19](#)

National Association of School Nurse Consultants

- [Interim Guidance on the Role of the State School Nurse Consultant – Return to School Planning](#)

National Education Association

- [All Hands on Deck: Initial Guidance Regarding Reopening School Buildings](#)

National Parent Teachers Association

- [Position Statement: Reopening of Public PreK-12 Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year](#)

STATE AND TERRITORIAL POLICY ACTIONS

- **California** [released](#) a comprehensive guidebook with considerations for jurisdictions that are reopening schools, along with other educational programs and services. Schools are required to provide daily live instruction, which can be done either in-person or virtual. Some jurisdictions have announced August start dates.
- **Connecticut** [issued](#) its school reopening plan and suggests that all school districts should plan for in-person instruction in the fall (many schools are scheduled to open in late August).
- **Tennessee** schools will be reopening in early August. The state provided [guidance](#) for local decision-makers. Most counties are choosing to offer in-person classes with virtual options.
- **Michigan** [outlined](#) its road map to safely reopen schools.
- **Kentucky** [announced](#) its plan to reopen schools in the fall with remote access only for Phases 1-3.
- **Florida** [announced](#) recommendations to safely reopen Florida's education system.
- **Maine** is [surveying](#) educational stakeholders in the ongoing development of its draft framework for returning to classroom instruction.
- The **Minnesota** Department of Education has three [contingency plans](#) for reopening schools in the fall.
- **Oregon** [issued](#) guidance for reentry into schools and requires local districts to submit their operational blueprints by Aug. 15.
- **Rhode Island** [issued](#) school reopening guidance and requires local districts to submit their plans by July 31.
- **Texas** issued guidance for [reopening](#) and student interactions.
- **Utah** [announced](#) its three phases of reopening schools and is requiring school districts to submit their plans by August 1.
- **Virginia's** [Return to School Plan](#) requires every public and private school to submit to the Virginia Department of Education a plan outlining their strategies for mitigating COVID-19 risk and complying with CDC and Virginia Department of Health recommendations. Public school divisions will also be required to submit a plan for providing new instruction to all students in the 2020-2021 academic year, regardless of phase or the operational status of the school at the time. This plan must also include strategies to address learning lost due to spring 2020 school closures and a plan for fully remote instruction should public health conditions require it.

- **West Virginia** [pushed back](#) their school reopening date to September 8 and have conceptualized a consolidated school year that would provide 180 days of instruction while still allowing the school year to conclude by the end of May.
- **Wisconsin** [released](#) guidance for district and school leadership to use as they plan for reopening schools in the fall semester.

COMMON THEMES

- Schools must maintain flexibility for full-time remote instruction if warranted by community infection rates.
- School districts need to provide plans for mitigating public health risks due to COVID-19 prior to school reopening, as well as plans for response and recovery after potential outbreaks.
- Special considerations must be made for remote learning technology access, including free broadband and/or devices for students who need them.
- Considerations must be made for special education needs for both in-person and remote learning.
- School districts opting for earlier fall start dates are considering plans to make up for time lost during spring closures.
- States and districts are placing emphasis on the importance of communication with families and sharing of schools' plans with communities.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [eSchool+ Initiative: Analysis of School Reopening Plans](#) - John Hopkins University
- [A Blueprint for Back to School](#) - American Enterprise Institute
- [Best Practices for Re-Opening Schools After Pandemic: An Overview](#) - Cordogan Clark Group
- [Summary of School Reopening Models and Implementation Approaches During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) - Washington State Department of Health and the University of Washington
- [Reopening America's Schools: A Public Health Approach](#) - Resolve to Save Lives

For questions or feedback, please email preparedness@astho.org.